



**Appropriations Committee Hearing
Testimony on Behalf of Connecticut's Libraries
February 11, 2009**

We understand the challenges the Governor and the Legislature face in this difficult economy, and we thank them for their continued support for Connecticut's libraries. Indeed, we face similar challenges in our own communities throughout the State. As you all grapple with ways in which to provide an adequate level of service to our residents with the limited resources likely to be available, we hope you will consider the following adjustments:

- **The modest amount spent for library services at the State level saves each and every one of our towns and cities many times that amount.** Discounts on library materials negotiated through the Connecticut Library Consortium, for instance, save the average public library \$40,000 per year. The Consortium is also launching a statewide Jobs Now online service for résumé review, cover letter editing, and mock interviews for 2009-2010 – how timely this program will be as it is delivered through library websites to our out of work residents across the State. Costing the State just \$20,000, this online resource is typical of the efficient and effective service our Consortium provides. ***We urge you to restore \$11,500 to the Connecticut Library Consortium budget, reinstating its 2008 level funding.***
- We ask as well that \$90,000 in funding for InfoAnytime, an around the clock online reference service be restored. Students and job seekers across the State use this service, available in both English and Spanish, when our public and academic libraries are closed and when they're unable to consult a librarian in person because of long lines in the library or lack of transportation. As demand grows and resources and open hours shrink, this service is needed more than ever. A cut of \$52,000 rather than the \$142,000 planned, will allow a continuation of InfoAnytime at \$90,000 by eliminating promotional materials and a coordinator's salary. ***We urge you to restore \$90,000 to the InfoAnytime budget that provides valuable access to this resource for community college students, distance learners, and those who need online research help at any time.***
- Finally, the proposed closing of the two small service centers in Middletown and Willimantic threatens the efficiency of shared resources and training that is so critical, especially to the smaller libraries in the State. Collaborative service delivery by Connecticut libraries makes the most of the funding we receive and stands as a model for agencies across the State. ***We urge you to reconsider the closing of the Middletown and Willimantic centers – they are critical facilitators of our efficiency.***

As you no doubt have heard, Connecticut libraries are serving record numbers this year. In the last quarter alone, my Wilton Library has seen computer use soar 21%, website use go up 19%, reference questions climb 42%, and in-house use of books, newspapers and magazines increase 38%. ***Please help us continue to serve as a safety net for our communities in the difficult months ahead - providing services and materials residents can no longer afford to buy themselves, giving free classes to boost skills and employability and providing free Internet access. Your understanding of the increased demand and support for our efforts will be an efficient investment in Connecticut's future.***